

Reduction – in – Force (RIF) Questions and Answers

Q1 Can an employee who is eligible for VERA, but who chooses to continue their Federal employment, request to be put on the PPP?

Answer: Yes. If the employee is impacted by RIF through either a Change to Lower Grade or Separation, employee will be a mandatory PPP registrant.

Q2 What is the decision about the disposition of term employees in the CA RIF? Will ALL term employees be released on a certain date? Or will term employees be released only when their positions have been identified for displaced permanent employees?

Answer: This question had been asked earlier; following is a more detailed response. If terms are filling permanent positions that work in CA/PWS positions, they could be bumped, retreated upon or separated, the same as any other USAG employee could be affected, under either a Contract or MEO (in-house) decision. If their position is eliminated in the MEO, then the RIF could start with them possibly bumping other USAG employees. They would not be automatically terminated at the start of the RIF.

If the USAG term employee does not work in a CA/PWS position, they would "not" be automatically terminated at the start of the RIF, but could be bumped, retreated upon, or separated by another USAG employee affected by the RIF.

The probability of the RIF affecting terms will be higher under a contract decision as opposed to a MEO decision.

Q3 First, a question about competitive levels. Are competitive levels for displacement in the first round of a RIF identified by overall series or by specific positions within a series. For example, for purposes of engineers, would a competitive level be identified as 0800 (for the overall engineer series) or as specific engineer positions, such as 0801, 0830, etc.?

Second, a question about bumping. After employees are displaced in the first round of a RIF, when CPOC determines positions in the competitive areas for which employees are qualified, is this determination made according to series and specific job qualifications? For example, can a displaced employee bump into ANY series, as long as he or she meets the qualifications of a particular position?

Answer: "The competitive level is defined by positions in a given competitive area (in this case, the US Army Garrison) that are in the same grade and series and duties and the duties, qualifications requirements, pay schedules and working conditions are similar enough that employees would be able to be assigned to one of the other positions within the same competitive level and perform that position within a very short span of time. In the question below, series 801, 830 would be the competitive level considered, not 800.

In the second round of placement in a RIF, bumping occurs when an employee displaces another employee in a lower tenure group or subgroup, such as a 1AD displacing a 1A employee. The position cannot be more than three grades or grade intervals or the equivalent below the position from which the employee is released. It can be to any position for which the employee is qualified."

Q4 If someone who is close to retirement as a civilian in a currently PWS position retires: what happens to the position? Does it remain a GS position if we win?

Answer: The future of the position is "not" affected by a person's decision to retire or not to retire. The future of the position (continuance, abolishment, change in grade) is decided by the approved Management Study's Most Efficient Organization, which includes a new organization structure and position grades.

All PWS positions under study (including current military positions) will be either GS or WG positions if the USAG wins the competition.

Q5 After attending the USAG Personnel in Reviewable Positions Training, as per my understanding, we were told that at this point in time, that 60 days prior to a RIF action taking place we could sign up for PPP. After experiencing BRAC, I can attest that 60 days will not be enough time to be placed under PPP. A minimum of 120 calendar days or more would be very beneficial. During BRAC, I registered for PPP as an Engineering Technician 0802 in October 1996. I did not get selected until February 1997. I'm sure there were others who did not get selected until much later. It was also my understanding that those eligible for VSIP or VERA would have to sign up prior to knowing the outcome of the CA study or MEO. This is another reason why a waiver should be requested and we should be permitted to register for PPP prior to RIF actions.

Answer: When we prepared the original milestones for the study, it was a requirement that employees be given 120 days notice of a Reduction-in-Force and the milestones were developed to meet that requirement. Since that time the requirement has been reduced to 60 days. That is the absolute minimum notice that can be given. There is adequate time built into the milestones that will allow the Commander to give more than 60 days notice. The final determination of when to complete the various personnel actions such as the release of RIF notifications and VERA/VSIP "windows" have not been established at this point. Initial decision - which is the preliminary decision as to in-house or contractor performance - is scheduled for 31 Jan 02. At this point, we will know the outcome of the study, pending any appeals. The MEO will also be made public at this time. The tentative timeframe for registering for VERA/VSIP is April 02. Affected employees will know the preliminary outcome of the study before being asked to consider VERA/VSIP. As for PPP registration - employees become eligible to register when they receive a specific RIF notice of separation or demotion. Local commanders may approve early registration (in advance of a formal separation or change-to-lower grade notice period) for employees expected to be adversely effected of up to one year to the effective date of the RIF action. The outcome of the study either a win by the government or a win by a private contractor, will be announced ahead of the VSIP/VERA window. The organizational composition resulting from the study will be generally available to the workforce for them to make an informed decision regarding the VSIP/VERA program.

Q6 When a RIF begins and the bump and retreat system comes into play, is there any way that employees can be given advanced notice that another employee is going to bump them due to seniority, etc.? What is going to be the ripple effect of the CA study if we lose the contract to contractors? Does CPAC have a list of employees who are going to be directly effected by the PWS, who may then bump someone else that is not?

Answer: Prior to the RIF being run, employees will know who has won the contract, and will be generally informed as to the organizational composition of the MEO. Employees in reviewable positions will be able to make informal decisions regarding the VSIP/VERA window that will open after the contract notification. Employees in reviewable positions may be able to determine if the RIF will impact them at this time. What we won't know is the overall bump/retreat impact of those employees who will be affected by the RIF run either as a result of winning the contract or losing it to an outside contractor.

Some of the effected employees may have bump/retreat rights to non-reviewable positions in various Garrison organizations. It depends on their previous work experience, service time, and veteran's status.

Q7 Which competitive area am I in and who am I competing against for my job?

Answer: Garrison personnel are assigned to one competitive area. In a RIF, you only compete with employees assigned to your competitive area.

Q8 What are the three groups of people that are used to determine who gets RIF'd first?

Answer: Tenure groups are used to determine order of precedence in a RIF. Group I identifies career tenure employees who have permanent competitive status which is obtained after three years of continuous federal service as a career-conditional employee (civilian). Group II identifies career conditional employees (full-time employees with less than three years of federal service). Group III identifies term employees (employees appointed to a position that will last more than one year but not more than 4 years and that is of a project nature where the job will terminate upon completion of the project). Within the groups are subgroups: AD, Which specifies veteran's preference with a compensable, service-connected disability of 30% or more; A, which specifies veteran's preference; and B, which means no preference. See the following chart for the order of precedence.

RIF ORDER OF PRECEDENCE (Listed highest to lowest)

Group I - Career Tenure

I-AD - Veteran's Preference w/30% Disability (HIGHEST)

I-A - Veteran's Preference

I-B - No Veteran's Preference

GROUP II - Career Conditional

II-AD - Veteran's Preference w/30% Disability

II-A - Veteran's Preference

II-B - No Veteran's Preference

Group III - Term

III-AD - Veteran's Preference w/30% Disability

III-A - Veteran's Preference

III-B - No Veteran's Preference

Q9 How is a person's time computed for RIF?

Answer: Determining creditable service for RIF purposes is covered by Chapter 6 of the Office of Personnel Management's Operating Manual, The Guide to Processing Personnel Actions (which can be reviewed with your CPAC Servicing Specialist.) Your service computation date (SCD) is determined and documented on a SF-144. Every employee has this form on file in their official personnel folder (OPF), which reflects their computed SCD. Performance appraisals are used to adjust the SCD for RIF purposes. (See next question).

Q10 What effect will my performance appraisal have during the RIF?

Answer: Performance appraisal ratings are used to adjust your service computation date (SCD) for RIF purposes. Your SCD is adjusted based on an average of the last three annual ratings received during the preceding four year period. The four year period is counted from the delivery date of the RIF letters or the performance appraisal cutoff date established by the CPOC, whichever is earlier. Level One ratings earn 20 years service credit, Level Two ratings earn 16 years, and Level Three ratings earn 12 years. No additional service credit is earned for Level Four or Level Five ratings.

Q11 What is the last performance appraisal that will be considered?

Answer: This cannot be determined until we have a more definitive timeline for the RIF.

Q12 Is there a deadline for updating my records before a RIF?

Answer: Employees should view their OPF's now to assure that information is up-to-date. Corrections or questions should be coordinated with your servicing personnel specialist. There will be a deadline but it will not be established until we have a more definitive timeline for the RIF.

Q13 How long do I retain my current pay if I am downgraded? What happens after that time expires?

Answer: Since this question is unique to each individual, determinations will be made on a case by case basis.

Q14 Can I refuse a position offer? Are there penalties if I do?

Answer: Yes, you can refuse a position offer. However, if you refuse a valid job offer, it will affect your entitlement to registration in the Priority Placement Program (PPP), grade and pay retention, and severance pay. Your entitlements will be defined in your specific RIF notice.

Q15 If I am in the RIF and my job opens back up at a later date, will I be recalled to fill that position or must I submit a new job application?

Answer: Employees who are downgraded or separated as a result of a RIF are registered in the Priority Placement Program (PPP) for the series and grade previously held. When vacancies occur, the PPP is cleared against possible matches. You do not have to submit an application for this process. If a vacancy opens for which you feel you qualify, you can apply for the position according to instructions in the vacancy announcement.

Q16 Do I have to be in the Resumix system to be eligible for a job if I receive a RIF notice?

Answer: No. The Resumix system is used for filling vacant positions through competitive processes. It is not used for Reduction In Force procedures.

Q17 Can a civilian employee use his or her spouse's veteran's preference?

Answer: Yes. Preference can be granted to the widow/widower or mother of a deceased veteran or to the spouse or mother of a disabled veteran who is not using the preference (is not employed). When the disabled veteran does use the preference, the mother or spouse is no longer entitled to it

Q18 What happens to temporary, term, and non-appropriated fund (NAF) employees?

Answer: Temporary employees do not compete in RIF. Term employees have limited rights in a RIF. They can only compete with other Term employees in a RIF. NAF employees do not compete in a RIF with appropriated fund (AF) employees. Temp and Term employees should contact their CPAC Servicing Specialist and NAF employees should contact the NAF personnel office for more information.

Q19 Will other Fort Detrick tenants be asked to place Garrison employees?

Answer: Employees who are displaced through RIF are registered in the DOD PPP. All vacancies, including tenant vacancies, will be cleared against PPP for possible placement of displaced employees. Registrants must qualify for the position in order to be placed.

Q20 Can displaced Garrison employees bump tenant activities in a RIF?

Answer: No, all USAG employees are in their own competitive area.

Q21 My function is not under study. Will I be affected?

Answer: You may be. If it is necessary to conduct a RIF, under the RIF rules, qualified and more senior persons performing functions in study areas could bump employees in the same competitive area whose functions are not under the CA study.

Q22 Can there be a RIF during this CA study? Not will there be, but is it legally possible if necessary?

Answer: Yes. It is important to note the CA study and a RIF are two completely separate operations. Even though an organization is going through a CA study, that does not change the mechanics of the RIF procedures.

Q23 How is the status of interns affected if they are in an area under CA study? Are they protected?

Answer: The status of interns during a CA study is no different than any other employee. However, if a RIF occurs, a full-performance employee cannot bump an intern employee. That is not to say that an intern could not be affected by a RIF. (For example, an intern with veteran's preference could bump an intern without veteran's preference.) In the event the intern's position is abolished, they would have the normal right to bump and retreat as other employees.